

VIOLA TECHNIQUE: IT'S NOT JUST A BIG VIOLIN!

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Overview of Session

- Bow technique and how it differs from that of the violin
- Issues unique to left-hand viola technique
- Exercises, studies and examples from the literature to help the student:
 - overcome these challenges
 - solidify technique of viola bow and left hand
 - effectively prepare for more advanced repertoire

The Viola Bow

Physics of the instrument require different attitude toward viola bow than toward violin bow:

- Less bow
- Lower in the bow
- Closer to the string

Student will gain more power, resonance and clarity from modifying the approach in this way.

Etudes and Repertoire to Develop the Bow

- Mastery of on-the-string strokes
 - Mazas #2-5
 - Telemann Viola Concerto, movements II and IV
- Getting off the string
 - Applying spiccato to two-octave scales in one position and previously learned etudes (in conjunct motion)
- Combining strokes and refining bow in the Classical style
 - Joseph Schubert Viola Concerto, movement I

The Left Hand

String length and hand size require a hand frame that “favors” the pinkie by making adjustments to the following:

- Thumb placement
- Position of wrist
- Mobility of the hand frame within one position

Other challenges for the left hand include:

- Keeping the fingers in close proximity to fingerboard
- The fourth finger
 - To curve or not to curve?
 - What’s pinkie length got to do with it?
 - How high the position?
- Placement of the thumb in the higher positions

Etudes for Developing the Left Hand Frame Throughout the Fingerboard

- Two-octave scales in one position through the 7th position
- Kreutzer #5 transposed to upper positions (learn in first position with no open strings first)
- Kreutzer #26